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SUBJECT: IO DAS SINGH AND AMB REES EU CONSULTATIONS

Classified By: Deputy Political Minister Counselor Alyce Tidball for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (U) During a two day visit to Brussels, Deputy Assistant Secretary Manisha Singh and Amb. Grover Joseph Rees met with

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officials from the European Commission, the Council Secretariat, the Presidency, the European Parliament and

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international NGO's to discuss human rights issues. The focus of the visit was to discuss the US reaction to the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), to explore alternative venues for advancing human rights, and to introduce DAS Singh to some of the interlocutors she will be working with in her new portfolio. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) DAS Singh and Amb. Rees spoke with Marek Grela, Director for America, the UN, Human Rights and Counter Terrorism at the European Council, and with Rolf Timans, Head of Unit for Human Rights and Democratization at the European Commission. Both Grela and Timans agreed with the U.S. position that the HRC's first year was disappointing, and shared the U.S. frustration with its anti-Israel focus, its procedural irregularities, and the loss of the Cuba and Belarus mandates. They disagreed, however, with any suggestion that the US and EU should withdraw their support and participation. They both said it was too early to make such a judgment. They further indicated they felt that there is no alternative international forum for human rights advocacy. Timans argued that despite the lack of results, he and the EU remain convinced that the process of continually raising human rights issues, holding discussions, seminars, dialogs, supporting human rights defenders and seeking ways to influence governments may have few immediate results but can have positive effects in the long run.

13. (C) Meetings were held with representatives from Germany and Portugal, the previous and current presidencies of the European Council. The German representative to the Political and Security Committee (PSC) Clemens Von Goetze said that although Germany was not happy with the last HRC meeting in June, when Germany still held the presidency, he believes that the "consensus" package was the best deal possible, and that the Universal Periodic Review gave the HRC a base that could be built upon. Amb. Rees disagreed strongly with this assessment. He argued that serious human rights abusers such as North Korea and Belarus would not fear scrutiny by a body in which Cuba held more influence than the U.S. Furthermore, the U.S. might be more inclined to deal with the poor results of the HRC if there had been some positive results to balance them. All that was produced, however, was one weak resolution on Darfur, and eight resolutions condemning Israel. The acting Portuguese PSC representative Antonio Leao Rocha did not comment on U.S. opinions regarding the HRC, as it was

not his portfolio but promised to relay U.S. concerns to Lisbon.

¶4. (C) Singh and Rees also met with Dr. Michael Rupp, a staff member from the European Parliament (EP) sub-committee on human rights. Rupp said MEPs were much less forgiving of the HRC's failings than the Commission or the Council, and were more demanding of action on human rights issues. The EP would be sending observers to the UN 3rd committee this fall, to show strong support for a progressive human rights policy. He did not think that there would be a lot of interest in publicly condemning the council. He also indicated that while the HRC is of great interest to the NGO community, European voters are generally not aware of its existence.

¶5. (U) In meetings with the Brussels staff of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Italian NGO No Peace Without Justice, Singh and Rees discussed particular human rights situations in Sudan, Indonesia, Democratic Republic of the Congo and other areas where these organizations have field operations. In particular, Singh and Rees learned about programs to protect women from rape and genital mutilation.

¶6. DAS Singh and Amb Singh approved this cable.

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